

The IOM Copiers Round The Island Yacht Race (RTI) last Sunday was won overall for the first time in three years by James Walker's Corby 33, Lilee, racing in the performance based NHC handicap division.

With the 2020 race cancelled due to COVID 19, and the 2019 race not producing a finisher due to very light winds, it was gratifying that of the nine yachts that started the race at Ramsey seven managed to finish.

What was a perfect summer's day for those on land was not ideal sailing weather for those at sea, although in the earlier part of the race - up to the Point of Ayre and then down the West Coast - Force 3 or 4 Southerly breezes were enough to keep the yachts going at a decent clip.

First to the Point was Ralph Kee's 22ft E-boat Eliza Bee, the smallest boat out. Kee had a great day, using all the skills developed as a Laser dinghy sailor in light airs to come second overall on corrected time. He had a couple of experienced sailors crewing for him in James Bishop and Andy Done.

Soon after the Point the biggest yacht Game Changer, a Beneteau 40.7 skippered by Shaun Douglas from N Ireland and racing in the IRC measurement based handicap division, went into the lead on the water, and held this all the way down the west coast.

Unfortunately Game Changer suffered after going round the Calf of Man when the wind died and the smaller, lighter yachts, Walker's Lilee and Keith Lord's AC35 Acrewed Interest began to catch up. Jerry Colman's Sigma 33 Seapie of Cultra, the only other yacht in the IRC division also took advantage with a good spinnaker run up the East coast.

Game Changer went close into land up the East coast and was caught in a lull, which allowed Lilee and later Acrewed Interest to overtake her around Port Soderick. Lilee got back to Ramsey around 8.30pm, with the other two yachts arriving half an hour or so later.

'We just got lucky really,' said Paul Carine, who was crewing in Lilee. 'It was a beat for seventy five per cent of the time.'

'We did well in light winds - we just kept the boat moving all the time,' said James Allison, also crewing in Lilee. 'The boat has been fitted out by a racer to race, so it went well.'

'We did a lot of peeling of the headsail,' said a third member of the seven-crewed Lilee, Lance Humphrey. 'There was a good fleet out there and it was nice to have a bit of competition.'

Lilee has only been sailing for a short while after being rebuilt by Chris Machin and owner, James Walker, and this was only the fifth time she has raced.

Jerry Colman's Sea-Pie of Cultra crossed the finish line at 10.20pm which was early enough to beat Game Changer on IRC by over an hour and so take the Ramsey Town Trophy.

Bayonet, a Beneteau 36.7 skippered by Colonel Andy Hadfield of the British Army's Infantry Sailing Association had a crew of soldiers, including sailing novices from

Catterick Garrison where their regiment is based in North Yorkshire. Ralph Kee's Eliza Bee and Brian Quayle's GK24 Nice One crossed the line after dusk had fallen.

The finishing order on NHC corrected time was Lilee, Eliza Bee, A-Crewed Interest, Sea-pie, Nice One, Game Changer and Bayonet. With the winds light and tidal gates tough to meet, Steve Bee's Nexus retired at Douglas, and May Shiu Chan's Nicola Jane at Jurby.

Walker picked up the Coronation Cup as winner of the non-IRC class. He also won the Golden Jubilee Trophy for Overall Monohull on NHC, the Bancroft Trophy for Class A boats, and the Ramsey Courier Cup for Winner on Elapsed Time.

Kee won the Shelagh Williams Trophy for winner of the non-IRC Class B, and the Maddrell Trophy for second in Overall Monohull.

Colman won the Ramsey Town Trophy and the IOM Breweries Cup for IRC handicapped boats.

The Copeland Trophy for Endeavour was awarded to Bayonet who sailed to the event from Conwy in North Wales with a crew including some first time racers, anchored overnight off Ramsey as they were not allowed to land due to Covid restrictions. Then completed the race and sailed straight back to Conwy, a good 200 miles of yachting without stepping ashore.

For Game Changer's crew there was a slight sense of disappointment given it had led for over half the race but that's yacht racing.

'There was a decent breeze at the start and we got up to the Point of Ayre in double quick time,' said David Craine, who was one of the nine crew. 'It was a good breeze going down the west side of the Island but a bit shifty, but once we got down to the bottom it became a bit of a lottery.'

'Towards the end it was tough - the last hundred yards took us longer than the stretch from Maughold to the Queen's Pier. The wind just died.'

Manx Sailing & Cruising Club would like to thank Mark Corrin of IOM Copiers for sponsoring the race and providing a BBQ at the MS&CC Clubhouse on Saturday evening. Also to race officers, Andrew Dean and Neil Boyes and to Niamh Poole for organising the catering on Saturday and Sunday plus Mark and Moira for bar duty.